

# National Disability Employment Framework Issues Paper Submission

July 2015

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 ABOUT JOBS AUSTRALIA

Jobs Australia is the national peak body for non-profit organisations that assist unemployed people to get and keep jobs. We help our members to make the most effective use of their resources to promote the need for services and support that will help unemployed people to participate fully in society.

We provide an independent voice for members who range from large charitable organisations to small local community-based agencies. All of our members are mission-driven organisations and many of our members provide services to people with a disability.

Jobs Australia is the largest network of employment and related service providers in Australia and is funded and owned by its members.

## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1 DIRECTION FOR REFORM

Jobs Australia welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Disability Employment Framework Review Issues Paper.

We make this submission with some of the context and background firmly in mind, including the comments by the Assistant Minister for Social Services, Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield in recent speeches. It is clear from the Assistant Minister's comments that there is a strong desire in Government for Disability Employment Services (DES) to be more closely aligned with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Minister has indicated that, in his view at least, aligning the programmes will mean that at least a portion of the funding is provided in the form of a personal budget.

In his [\*speech to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia on 27 April 2015\*](#), Minister Fifield said:

*"As the consultations begin, here are some thought starters. Some ideas. A system:*

- *Where employers, people with disability and employment service providers interact with each other in a digital market place; where employers choose whether they want to deal directly with potential employees, or through intermediaries;*
- *Where job seekers have access to an 'employment account' that they can use to purchase support, such as generalised or niche employment services, training, workplace assistance and on occasion, subsidy. Where a component of support, NDIS-like, attaches to the individual to be deployed by them;*
- *Where people with disability are able to purchase training that helps them into a career, not just a first job;*
- *Where disability service providers specialise in particular industries or fields, like childcare, or hospitality, or business services."*

Jobs Australia supports models that empower individuals because they are more likely to tap into job seekers' intrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation is important because employment outcomes depend so much on the efforts of the job seeker. Extrinsic motivators, such as financial incentives or penalties, while important for the enforcement of mutual obligation requirements, elicit the wrong type of compliance: grudging, technical compliance with the rules, rather than genuine motivation to find a job.

There are, however, key differences between existing NDIS supports and employment supports, which make the task of aligning the two more difficult than it might first seem.

## 2.2 EXISTING DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Naturally, the design of any new system should draw on the lessons from the past and to that end, it is important to note that DES is not the only employment programme for people with a disability. In fact, more people with a disability participate in the mainstream employment service (formerly Job Services Australia, now *jobactive*) than in all of the disability-specific programmes combined.

Providers of *jobactive* and DES operate under contracts with the Federal Government, with providers initially selected by tender. Winning tenderers are offered a share of referrals from the Department of Human Services in their contract area. Under the performance framework, poorly performing providers (measured with reference to the employment outcomes achieved) can have their caseload share reallocated to a higher performing provider. Outcome-based funding (where providers are paid certain amounts only after an employment outcome has been achieved) and highly sophisticated performance measurement and management (underpinned by the star ratings system) have been important drivers of improvements in performance.

Notably, *jobactive* (like its predecessors, JSA and the Job Network) includes a portion of funding that is available to purchase supports for job seekers, and which is known as the 'Employment Fund' (previously 'Employment Pathway Fund'). Job seekers can choose a provider, but if they do not exercise that choice then they will be referred to a provider by the Department of Human Services. Job seekers in *jobactive* negotiate a 'Job Plan' (previously 'Employment Pathway Plan') with their provider, which can include supports purchased from the 'Employment Fund'.

These features notionally give job seekers a degree of choice and control. In theory, a job seeker chooses their provider, negotiates a plan and negotiates for supports to be purchased by the provider from the Employment Fund. In practice, however, the system is quite prescriptive and many job seekers exercise very little choice, opting instead for defaults that are chosen for them by Government and its contracted service providers. This tendency has been noted in every major review of the system, including the Productivity Commission's [Independent Review of the Job Network](#) way back in 2001.

If a key objective of this review is to empower job seekers through choice and control, then the experiences with previous programmes is highly relevant. There must be consideration, for example, of the reasons and drivers behind job seeker choice (or lack of it) in these systems and what might need to change if job seekers are to have genuine choice and control. It should also be recognised that, as in the NDIS, different cohorts of people in the DES caseload will have varying capacity to exercise choice and control.

### 2.3 WELFARE SYSTEM REVIEW

The income support system is another important part of the context. It has, however, been discussed at some length in the [Review of Australia's Welfare System](#), headed by Patrick McClure AO, which handed down its [final report](#) in February of this year. Jobs Australia made a [submission](#) to that review, which details our views on the welfare system.

It should be noted that many of the issues examined in the Welfare Review are relevant to this discussion.

### 2.4 CHALLENGES ARISING FROM THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

On the basis of this context and background, we approach the preparation of this submission with some assumptions. These include assumptions that, in the future:

- Disability employment services will be aligned to some extent with the NDIS and will include a portion of funding that is controlled by the person with a disability.
- Many (if not most) people with a disability will continue to receive employment services through the mainstream employment service (ie: *jobactive*) and some job seekers will move between disability-specific and mainstream service systems through their lifetimes.
- Outcome-based payments from Government to providers will continue to be an important driver of performance.
- Most people with a disability will continue to be subject to participation and other mutual obligation requirements .

If these assumptions are correct, then issues that arise include:

- How to design individualised funding that gives job seekers genuine choice and control, tapping into intrinsic motivations, rather than merely notional (on paper) choice and control.
- How to mesh an outcome-based payment model with individualised funding.
- How to ensure that disability-specific arrangements are sufficiently consistent with mainstream services to allow for people to move between them.
- How to balance mutual obligation with choice and control.

Jobs Australia believes these challenges need to be properly understood, but none of them is fatal to the proposition that job seekers should be empowered to take control of their services. All of these challenges can be overcome. The task is, however, much more complicated than it might appear at first glance and there are a series of tensions that need to be managed.

## 3. DESIGNING INDIVIDUAL FUNDING APPROACHES

### 3.1 LESSONS FROM OTHER INDIVIDUALISED FUNDING SYSTEMS

There is now a wealth of literature on individualised funding arrangements for social services from around the globe. We will not attempt to review them all here – suffice to say that there are some individualised support schemes that have worked well and others that have not, but there is always something we can learn.

Most relevant to this discussion, however, is a Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2010 paper, [Effectiveness of individual funding approaches for disability support](#). That research looked at individualised funding for disability support in Australian States and Territories and also compared some international examples. The paper notes the key differences between the schemes.

These differences provide a useful guide to the key questions that must be answered when designing an individualised funding scheme. For example, questions that might need to be answered in the design process include:

- **Who is it for / who is eligible for the services?** Note that under present arrangements many people with a disability are not serviced by a DES provider.
- **Who holds and manages the funds?** This question goes to the extent of choice and control. There could be an approval process or a provider / government delegate may manage the funds on the job seeker's behalf. The greater the involvement of another party, the less choice and control for the individual.
- **Which parts of the funding are portable?** A personal budget could move with the job seeker when they change provider, but if there are other components of funding (particularly any attached to outcomes) then other considerations come into play.
- **What types of supports can be purchased?** Job seekers could have completely free choice to spend their support entitlement as they see fit, or they could have some constraints on their choices, such as allowing only supports from a pre-approved 'menu' or requiring job seekers to draw up (and justify) a budget.
- **What type of market for supports?** Options here depend on answers to the preceding questions, but options include leaving it completely to the market, regulating independent providers in some way or by contracting providers and specifying services in detail.
- **What accountability is there?** Again the options depend on other answers. If job seekers are exclusively responsible for their own funding, then the accountability will fall entirely on the job seeker. If responsibility is shared, then an accountability framework will need to make both the job seeker and their provider accountable in some way.

Some of the questions in the Issues Paper are difficult to answer without any particular set of arrangements in mind. For example, support for employers in a system where all of the funding is individualised and placed in the hands of job seekers will necessarily be very different to arrangements in a system where support services remain coordinated or managed by a contracted provider. This simply means that some of the Issues Paper questions may need to be revisited once options for a model for the future system are narrowed down.

## 4. RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS IN THE ISSUES PAPER

### 4.1 WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

What can improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

What can help reduce barriers for people with disability seeking employment?

What can help reduce barriers for employers hiring people with disability?

How can we promote the benefits of employing people with disability?

The Issues Paper clearly shows that Australia's record on workforce participation and employment outcomes for people with disabilities needs to improve. It outlines a convincing argument for the reform of the disability employment framework, to close the 30 per cent gap in workforce participation between people with disability and those without disability.

While service reform is needed, the Paper acknowledges that barriers to participation need to be addressed on both the supply and demand sides of the labour market. Changes are needed in the ways people with disabilities are motivated and supported to seek and stay in employment, and in turn in the ways employers are motivated and supported to employ them.

Unemployed people with disability must overcome additional barriers, compared to other unemployed people, to participate in training and to find work that is suited to their particular skills and capabilities. As recently identified by the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#), these barriers include:

- health issues;
- discrimination;
- risks of a reduced or lost access to the Disability Support Pension;
- inflexible work arrangements;
- lack of accessible transport;
- difficulty obtaining reasonable adjustments and appropriate technology in the workplace; and
- workplace design.

To overcome these additional barriers to employment, people with disability need access to specialised and high quality employment services and training, disability-confident employers, accessible infrastructure and an income support system that rewards participation and capability instead of perceived deficits.

The Issues Paper acknowledges that employer perceptions and misconceptions about employing people with a disability can be a barrier to workforce participation. Service providers and Government can help employers to understand the benefits of employing a person with a disability, their legal obligations and rights, support services available and how to create a supportive workplace. The current Australian Human Rights Commission inquiry into employment discrimination

against Australians with disability appears to go further, acknowledging that it's not only up to employment service providers to change employer attitudes, and that Government, industry organisations, individual employers and other organisations in the community also have a role to play in shaping those attitudes.

#### 4.2 PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGES TO DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Do you agree with these as the underlying set of principles for change?

Are there other principles you would include?

Jobs Australia supports the underlying set of principles for change to DES, including the emphasis upon the individual being at the centre of service delivery. We agree that DES needs to give individuals greater choice and control of market-driven services, which flexibly respond and innovate to meet their needs and aspirations.

People in DES have a very wide range of needs and participation requirements. They are assessed in terms of their:

- eligibility for the NDIS and DES-ESS or DES-DMS services;
- DES Funding Level;
- income support allowance;
- participation requirements; and
- work capacity, which ranges from 8 hours per week upwards.

A shift towards treating people as active consumers, rather than passive recipients of services, will need to take account of this diversity. This is particularly important in relation to the key role of DES providers in assisting people to meet any mutual obligation and participation requirements in order to improve their prospects of employment.

Jobs Australia supports the principles of individual funding and market-based service provision. These principles create an opportunity to remove the existing distinction between people in the NDIS who may or may not currently be eligible for DES. But they also create opportunities to build better services for all in DES, including employers. Better services would:

- increase job seekers' responsibility, autonomy and activity;
- increase their employability and capacity for work;
- be more responsive to individual needs and aspirations;
- engage and empower job seekers and employers to create new opportunities;
- be more satisfying; and
- be more flexible, efficient and effective at delivering employment outcomes.

The principle of increased open employment options is welcome, but questions have also been raised about whether this focus may be too narrow. This focus may exclude employment arrangements chosen by people with disability that may not be considered open, such as supported employment or other forms of work in social enterprises that may receive additional funding, or in an



“enclave” with other people with disability. A flexible approach that supports choice and flexibility, accommodates individualised aspirations and definitions of success and participation in the workforce are all needed.

The shift towards more market-driven services based on consumer choice involves risks for service quality. The new disability employment framework must be adequately resourced and regulated to deliver high quality services and sustainable employment. Service quality must be rewarded, and not compromised as a result of changes. This includes compliance with the National Disability Service Standards. The focus on quality must not, however, unnecessarily constrain market-based service provision. The system needs to support flexibility, innovation and responsiveness. This means that regulation must be targeted and balanced, and proportionate to the risks involved.

The role of government needs to be redefined from intrusive micro-management and hands-on control of the market of service providers, to becoming a steward of the system. This would involve separating the policing of the system from other administrative functions under a risk-based framework. A stewardship role would also involve ensuring job seekers and providers have access to good information, increasing opportunities for consumer choice. It would also foster genuine competition, without undermining the necessary collaboration between providers for the delivery of holistic services to job seekers and employers.

Finally, the new disability employment framework needs to be focussed on sustainable employment for all job seekers with disability, regardless of the individual barriers each may face. Incentives for providers, job seekers and employers will need to be aligned with this objective, avoiding “creaming and parking” and ensuring that all people get the support they need.

### 4.3 CURRENT SERVICES OVERVIEW

How effective are the pathways into these services?

How well do these programmes work together to support people with disability throughout their life-course, including for conditions episodic in nature?

Are there other services which could assist people with disability to find a job?

What scope is there to move employment services to an individualised funding model?

DHS assessments are the gateway into the ADEs, DES and *jobactive*. Because they determine the referral pathway into these services, these assessments must be evidence-based and as accurate as possible to ensure that job seekers get the services and supports they need in a timely fashion. Assessments must be resourced adequately to ensure they are undertaken by skilled and experienced assessors, with knowledge of employment services and the labour market, and who can provide tailored and appropriate service recommendations.

While DES and *jobactive* are demand-driven, ADE places are not. This reduces the availability and effectiveness of pathways into supported employment. At this stage it is not clear how and whether incorporating ADEs into the NDIS will increase the supply of supported employment opportunities.

Employment services do not tend to work together to support people with disability throughout the life-course. The gatekeeping function of the DHS assessment prevents providers from directly referring people from one programme to another, even if the provider delivers both programmes at the same location. Other than a requirement to update the JSCI in DES and *jobactive* which may

trigger a re-referral, providers focus on delivering the programme services they are contracted and funded to deliver.

In terms of support across the life-course, the services are constrained by rules concerning eligibility for and exit from services. This includes restricted or no access to services by school students, or time limited periods of service. While, under current arrangements, people with disabilities can receive unlimited support through ADEs or Ongoing Support in DES, the programmes overall are not set up to work together over the life-course. This does not help to ensure that all job seekers or workers with disabilities get access to the services they need.

People with disability in employment, including people with episodic conditions, may need access to intensive specialised support to help them stay employed. This support is available through DES but not through *jobactive*. The low take up rate of DES Job in Jeopardy services suggests more could be done to encourage and support *jobactive* providers to raise awareness and increase referrals to these services.

As identified in recent [Evaluation of Disability Employment Services](#), many people with disabilities have casual and short term jobs and would prefer work with longer hours, better long-term prospects and opportunities for career progression. More could be done across the life-course to support for people with disability rapidly reconnect with assistance if they fall out of insecure employment, and if they are in stable employment, to develop their career to achieve a more satisfying or rewarding job. This could involve access to career counselling or mentoring, skills development opportunities and job search support.

Moving towards an individualised funding model may increase opportunities for people and employers to access the supports they need, when they need them. It seems likely though that there will still need to be the ability in the system to monitor the participation requirements attached to income support for people with higher levels of work capacity. This suggests an ongoing role for service providers to manage job seeker participation as required.

Under an individualised funding model for employment services, the size of the individual component of support that goes directly to job seekers should be determined on the basis of individually assessed needs and aspirations.

#### 4.4 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN CONTEXT

How can elements of the disability support system better link with employment support to improve employment outcomes for people with disability?

Are there other contextual factors of the job seeker that should be considered?

Jobs Australia welcomes the broader focus in the Issues Paper on supports that affect employment outcomes for people with disability, rather than looking only at employment support services. We agree with the need to have employment-focussed investment in the early stages of life and in the transition from education to employment.

A common theme amongst many people with disability who participate successfully in employment is that they were encouraged by their carers from an early age to participate alongside people without disability. They were motivated by a sense of high expectations and received the support and opportunities they needed to set and achieve their goals.

Similarly, the entire system of support for people with disability needs to reinforce and support a culture of success and achievement in employment. The system needs to reward participation and build on people's strengths and capabilities, rather than focus on what people with disability are incapable of achieving by comparison with others. What is needed is a more holistic approach that integrates disability support and employment services. This could involve more collaboration and stronger linkages to improve services and the focus on employment, such as co-located mental health and employment services as already occurs in DES.

Improvements are also needed to better identify and support young people with disability to make successful transitions from education to employment. This includes more intensive specialist support in school, VET and higher education for young people with disabilities to achieve higher levels of attainment and establish a career pathway. Improvements can also be made in access to specialist services that take account of a person's disability support needs, including individualised career planning, access to work experience and mentoring. Access to job placement with intensive post-placement support while still in full-time education could also be expanded.

Another challenge is that people with disability may be discouraged from participation in employment by their carer or family. This may be due to low expectations or because of the impact upon a carer's eligibility for income support if the person cared for starts working. This suggests some carers need improved access to services to find employment themselves and to build their capacity to support people with disability into employment.

Finally, some people with disability have a fear of losing their entitlement to income support that outweighs their perception of the benefits of employment. The higher level of the Disability Support Pension and more generous concessions for DSP recipients by comparison with Newstart creates a perverse incentive for people to demonstrate a lower level of work capacity to be and remain eligible for the DSP. We need an income support system that better rewards participation, in combination with workplaces that are more supportive and accommodating of the needs and capabilities of people with disability.

## 4.5 OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

### 4.5.1 Disability Employment Services (DES)

How can DES providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?  
 How can DES providers better support people with disability in the workplace?  
 How can DES providers better support employers?  
 How can the employment service model be improved to help providers deliver better support?  
 Does DES need to be redesigned to operate in an NDIS environment?

In order to deliver on the principles for change identified in the Issues Paper, there are a number of ways that DES providers can better assist people with disability and employers to achieve better employment outcomes.

Improvements in assistance to people with disabilities include:

- Adopting a person-centred approach to service delivery, where people with disability are viewed as customers, rather than participants in services. This means delivering flexible and innovative services that respond to individual needs and choices.
- Providing more intensive support that is consistent and integrated with other disability service needs.
- Providing specialised career development advice that is informed by knowledge of available disability supports in the workplace and the current and future labour market needs of particular industries and employers.
- Offering ongoing access to training and skills development opportunities to help people acquire the skills employers need, consistent with their career goals.
- Increasing opportunities for peer support and mentoring opportunities for job seekers and people in work.
- Increasing support to develop a career for people already in work, to enable movement to higher level and pay or more satisfying employment.

Improvements in support for employers include:

- Enabling and resourcing higher levels of engagement between providers and employers to raise awareness of the benefits of employing a person with a disability, as well as other support services available such as the Employment Assistance Fund, Supported Wage System, JobAccess information and support, National Disability Recruitment Coordinator and wage subsidies.
- Offering expert advice that can successfully challenge employer perceptions that employing a person with a disability is too risky, costly or complicated.
- Making better quality job matches, based on better understanding of the specific needs of employers prior to placement and of the specific career needs and capacity of the people who are placed into work
- Facilitating collaboration amongst providers where needed to meet the needs of larger employers.

In the NDIS environment, with individualised funding, user choice is at the heart of service delivery. Under this approach, participants receive an assessed entitlement based on their needs, which they can take to service providers of their choice. If the NDIS model were to be applied to DES, providers would need to be able to deliver flexible and innovative services that respond to job seeker choices and employer needs. In order for providers to do this, different and more streamlined and efficient compliance and regulatory arrangements would be needed. Higher financial risks for providers, which would be a consequence of unfettered job seeker choice, should somehow be reflected in the financial architecture of the system.

A possible problem which might arise as a consequence of the introduction of increased choice in DES is that many job seekers may find it hard to select a provider or service. Significant resources are needed by job seekers to exercise informed choice when it comes to complex services. People may lack information, expertise, access to communication channels or cognitive capacity to understand the choices available to them.

These costs of exercising choice as a consumer can be addressed by improving access to information and communication channels, and providing brokerage and advocacy services. These services would identify each job seeker's needs and employment goals, develop a plan and a tailored package of services to achieve them.

Under the NDIS, people with disability may choose their own provider of the supports in their personal plan. They also get to choose how the funding for their supports is managed. Funding can be: self-managed; through a registered plan management provider; managed by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); or a combination of these approaches.

If a person wants the NDIA to manage the funding for their supports, they must choose a registered (or licensed) provider. To become registered (or licensed), a provider must meet requirements regarding qualifications, approvals, experience and capacity for the support needed. This involves compliance with Australian, state or territory requirements, including quality assurance and management systems. For some NDIS participants, the registration process is expected to make it easier to choose their provider.

This registration or licensing approach could be applied more widely to disability employment services. As with the NDIS, DES providers could become registered to provide assistance to access and maintain employment, after demonstrating evidence of their capacity and experience. Registering or licensing providers would help people to exercise choice, and compared to the existing tender arrangements for government purchasing under DES, it could also increase competition. A process of registering or licensing providers would avoid unnecessarily restricting the number of providers in the market, and increase the number of providers to choose from.

Many other often complex issues concerning market design and regulation would also need to be addressed. Some possible approaches to market design, which could be applied to DES, are set out in our [Blueprint for Reforming Employment Assistance](#).

#### 4.5.2 Job Services Australia (JSA)

How can JSA providers better assist people with disability to prepare for and find a job?  
 How can JSA providers better support people with disability in the workplace?  
 How can JSA providers better support employers and respond to employer needs?  
 How do you think the proposed changes will improve the JSA model and employment outcomes for people with disability?

It is not yet clear that the changes being implemented through *jobactive* on July 1 will improve employment outcomes for people with disability compared to JSA.

On one hand, under *jobactive*, specialist disability employment contracts have been abolished and there has been a significant reduction in the number of providers compared to previous arrangements under JSA. This means there has been a reduction in choice for people with disability, and it is quite likely that there has been a loss of disability specialist capacity within the system of providers.

On the other hand, the significant and greater financial incentives for outcomes available to *jobactive* providers may well result in their investing in their own internal capabilities for provision of high

quality services for people with disabilities or in their procuring services from expert and capable external service providers. The significantly increased and enhanced level of employer engagement which is being required of all *jobactive* providers could also be very beneficial in terms of increased outcomes for job seekers with disability.

The improvements identified for DES above could also be applied to the new *jobactive* service if the providers believe they are affordable and otherwise warranted (because they will achieve more outcomes) and would not need to be mandated by their purchaser.

#### 4.5.3 Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)

Can we improve support for people moving out of ADEs into open employment?

How can ADEs operate as viable businesses?

A key challenge for moving people out of ADEs into open employment is providing reassurance that they will not lose access to their supported employment place if things don't work out and they need to return.

As ADEs transition to the NDIS, there is an emerging risk that the level of funding for supported employment places will become unsustainable. The costs of establishing and operating supported employment places, following the Federal Court decision that the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) unlawfully discriminated against employees with intellectual disability, are high and rising. In the absence of other financial support, it may be necessary for ADEs to increase the prices they charge their customers in order to operate as viable businesses.

#### 4.5.4 Support for Employers

Are employers aware of these supports?

How can supports help achieve long-term employment for people with disability?

Are the support needs of large employers different to the support needs of small employers?

How can we encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability?

What other supports or approaches could increase employment participation of people with disability?

Many employers are not aware of the supports available through DES and Employment Assistance and Other Services (EAOs). The [evaluation of DES](#) released in 2014 showed that only around half of all employers report some awareness of DES, while awareness of other assistance varies between 10 and 20 per cent. It is important to note though that some employers receive services without knowing they are funded by the DES programme. This is because providers can use their own branding to avoid negative stereotypes which might be sometimes associated with unemployed people and disability. Given that employers' use of DES was most often the result of a direct approach by a DES provider, it appears that there is scope for providers to increase the awareness and uptake of DES and EAOs by employers.

Another important finding of the evaluation was that Job in Jeopardy (JIJ) is an effective service, but was very limited in reach because of its restricted eligibility criteria. JIJ support requires evidence that a job is at risk because of sickness or disability, which may be perceived as discrimination. JIJ guidelines have since been changed to protect non-disclosure of disability in the workplace. While the number of people in JIJ appears to have increased, the number of participants remains small in comparison with the overall number of people in DES. Earlier and expanded access to JIJ would be desirable.

Similarly, the take up rate of Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) services is *very low*. While EAF support can be applied for directly by employers and people with disability, the majority of applications come from employment service providers. This year's Budget included provision for a new \$9m *JobAccess Gateway* – an online service centre for people with disability and employers that provides a central point for disability employment information and services. While the new gateway is designed to enhance the capacity of people with disability and employers to access services directly, providers will still have an important role to play in helping people access the supports they need.

The support needs of large, medium and small employers are different. Large employers may have a bigger commitment or capacity to employ and support a person with disability, but may have a centralised recruitment process and be unwilling to work with multiple providers. Medium and small employers may be more risk averse and need more intensive support.

To encourage more engagement between employers and people with disability, we need to increase access to supports and incentives and reduce the costs and risks associated with employment. This includes increasing the knowledge and confidence of employers about what is needed to hire and support workers with disability. Much more research and consultation about different employers' needs in relation to engaging people with disabilities and retaining them in employment is also needed, not just with peak employer organisations but also with hundreds of thousands of small and medium enterprises which employ the great majority of Australians.

## 4.6 OTHER SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

### 4.6.1 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

In what way do you think the NDIS can support employment outcomes for people with disability?  
What do you think we can learn from the NDIS to improve job services for people with disability?

The NDIS is expected to have a massive impact on the disability services sector. It's expected that 460,000 people with a significant and permanent disability will be supported through the NDIS by July 2019. Each of them will have a plan that includes their individual goals, aspirations and the reasonable and necessary supports they need to achieve them. When fully operational, the NDIS will have doubled the funding for these supports, through individualised funding packages which are based on the principles of user choice and control.

Under the NDIS approach to government-funded service delivery, the citizen becomes a consumer and the service providers become their customers. Rather than providers being to some extent block-funded to deliver services, the funding goes to the individual. Instead of being accountable to

government, the provider is accountable to the consumer, and they would have to provide services that the consumer wishes to buy.

Jobs Australia supports the view that if a more market-oriented approach were adopted, one which is driven by consumer choice, we can get better services than DES is currently delivering. Instead of services that are quite prescriptive, this approach offers the opportunity for service providers to better meet the needs of people with disability and their employers. Services could be more flexible, efficient and effective at delivering employment outcomes.

Applying this approach will also effectively enable all people in the NDIS to be eligible for DES, and also to exercise choice and control over the purchase of the employment services and supports they need.

#### 4.6.2 Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs)

What more can be done to assist people with mental illness to find a job?

What more can be done to support people with mental illness in the workplace?

People with mental illness are much less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed compared to other people with disabilities. This suggests the current system of services is not well equipped to provide them with the support they need. As PHaMs transitions to the NDIS, it will be important to ensure that people with disability retain access to personal support and mentoring services where it is needed.

Specific barriers that people with mental illness face include its episodic nature, stigma, fears about disclosure and employer attitudes. More needs to be done to help people access the intensive support they need, when they need it, without fear of adverse consequences for their employment.

Available evidence of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) approach demonstrates that work can actually be part of the recovery process, highlighting the strong benefits of employment and mental health services working together. Any redesign of the disability employment services system should therefore have closer integration of employment and mental illness services as an important goal. Other important elements of IPS include rapid job search, employment that reflects job seeker preferences and ongoing individualised support to maintain employment.

#### 4.7 LIFE-COURSE AND DIVERSITY

Are there particular milestones which have a positive impact on employment prospects for people with disability?

What issues need to be considered in relation to specific groups of people with disability?

What approaches work with the different groups and these different issues



Milestones that have a positive impact on employment prospects for people with disability include:

- Early intervention support in childhood;
- Inclusive learning and integration support to stay engaged with education;
- Career guidance, work experience and paid employment while at school;
- Mentoring support during the transition from education to employment; and
- Timely access to support to remain in employment, including for people who acquire a disability.

For specific groups of people with disability not already mentioned, specific issues and approaches include:

- **People with intellectual impairment in open employment** are rarely able to fill advertised vacancies and face high levels of unemployment compared with other people with disability. They need assistance from providers with specialist skills and competencies in arranging job carving, job matching, and on-the-job training and support.
- For **people over 50 with disability**, issues can include managing disability acquired with age and employer age discrimination. Effective approaches include awareness training to create disability confident employers and supportive workplaces, with timely access to supports to remain in employment or rapidly return to work.
- **People with disability and a work capacity of 8-14 hours a week** will usually be on the Disability Support Pension. Those with no requirements to participate in employment services do so voluntarily. It is particularly important that Disability Employment Services are engaging and responsive to their needs, and it is hoped that applying the principles of choice will deliver more satisfying services that will increase their rate of participation. Another issue for this cohort is the fear that participation in employment will affect eligibility for the DSP, the rates of payment of which are significantly higher than Youth Allowance or Newstart payments. Reforms will need to focus on delivering increased rewards, rather than a perception of increased penalties, as a result of increased participation in services and employment.
- **People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**, along with their friends, families and carers, may lack awareness of their rights to available benefits, services and supports. Services also may lack the skills and resources to meet the specific needs of CALD people. These issues can be addressed through increased availability of translator services and information in a range of languages, as well as through increased training and education of service providers.
- **Indigenous people with disability** face multiple disadvantages, including racism and a lack of access to specialist disability support services, particularly in remote areas. They may have a different cultural understanding of disability, low expectations and limited awareness of services and supports available. According to [First People's Disability Network](#), increased awareness of the impact of disability and greater engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability is needed:

*There are no simple solutions to these issues. Instead, the way to approach these complexities from a policy perspective is through empathy and respect, with direct communication with those most affected.*